

Self-Assessment Checklist for Online Courses

This checklist is an abbreviated version of the Online Education Initiative's [Course Design Rubric](#).

Yellow indicates items that should definitely be addressed prior to submitting a course for review.

Not sure how to implement the Rubric? Explore our [Course Design Resources](#)! (Each item has a direct link as well.)

A: Content Presentation	Yes	Not Sure
A1: I've included unit objectives in the individual learning units/modules .		
A2: My objectives include demonstrable learning outcomes and are written in language that is student-centered .		
A3: I've ensured unit content and activities are aligned with unit objectives and the connection between content/activities and unit objectives is made explicitly clear to the students.		
A4: I've set up navigation and content flow that are easily determined by the user, including a clear starting point.		
A5: I've presented content in visibly distinct learning units or modules. I've consistently structured and sequenced my learning units or modules, allowing students to better anticipate and manage their workload.		
A6: I've chunked page content in manageable segments using descriptive headings and subheadings that facilitate online reading and enhance student understanding of the material.		
A7: I've used Canvas tools to reduce the labor-intensity of learning and streamline access to materials and activities for students.		
A8: I've used a variety of media (e.g., text, audio, video, and/or graphics) throughout the course.		
A9: I've included instructions for learners to work with content in meaningful ways (e.g. guiding students to take notes during a video, explaining the purpose of an external resource), and those instructions are directly embedded with the content or activity.		
A10: I've provided individualized learning opportunities , such as remedial activities or resources for advanced learning.		
A11: Learners have the opportunity to give anonymous feedback to me regarding course design and/or course content at or after course completion.		
A12: Institutional and instructor policies relevant for learner success (e.g., academic honesty, add/drop, late work, grading, etc.) are included and easy to find.		
A13: I've included clearly labeled links to institutional services , such as disability resources, online tutoring, online counseling and online readiness.		
A14: I've provided an explanation of technology support and ensured relevant contact information and/or links are easily found.		

B: Interaction	Yes	Not Sure
B1: I initiate contact prior to or at the beginning of the course and provide multiple resources to help students successfully get started.		
B2: I've included regular instructor-initiated contact using Canvas communication tools in my course design.		
B3: I encourage students to initiate contact with me through easily accessed contact information that includes expected response times .		
B4: I've provided and encourage opportunities for student-initiated interaction (non-graded and unstructured) with other students that contribute to a student-centered learning environment.		
B5: I've included opportunities for regular effective contact among students (e.g., discussions, group projects, peer review) to build a sense of community among learners.		
B6: I've provided guidelines explaining required levels of student participation (i.e., quantity and quality of interactions) along with a rubric or equivalent grading document to explain how participation will be evaluated.		
C. Assessment	Yes	Not Sure
C1: I've developed assessment activities that lead to the demonstration of learning outcomes . As much as possible, I've designed assessments to mimic authentic environments to facilitate transfer.		
C2: I've ensured that assessments align with the unit objectives .		
C3: I've included both formative and summative assessments.		
C4: I've included multiple assessments throughout the course and provide students with timely feedback .		
C5: I've included rubrics or descriptive criteria for desired outcomes in all or most of the assessments.		
C6: I've provided instructions that clearly explain to students how to successfully complete each assessment.		
C7: I've included a clear description of how meaningful, timely feedback on assessments will be provided. I've provided students with instructions on accessing feedback in Canvas and on applying it to improve learning/performance.		
C8: I've included opportunities for student self-assessment , with feedback.		

Adapted from original by Liz du Plessis, Distance Education, Santa Rosa Junior College (12/16/16).

Section D Accessibility Checklist

- Content exceeding ½-page is chunked using meaningful section headings
- Heading styles are nested in sequential descending order
- Images have appropriate alt text
- Images not related to page content are designated as decorative
- Link text is meaningful and in context
- Underlining is not used for emphasis
- Color contrast is sufficient
- Color alone is not used to convey meaning
- Lists are formatted using the default list tool
- Tables have properly tagged column/row headers
- Videos have proper captioning (not auto-generated)
- Audios have appropriate transcripts
- Videos/audios are not set to auto-play

See below for help in gaining more understanding of the checklist requirements.

Headings

Purpose: When encountering a lengthy page, sighted users often skim the page quickly and look for big, bold text (headings) to get an idea of page structure and content. Screen reader and other assistive technology users have the ability to do the same IF the page is styled properly.

- ▶ Heading 1 is typically a page title or a main content heading. It is the most important heading, and there is generally just one.
- ▶ Heading 2 is usually a major section heading.
- ▶ Heading 3 is usually a sub-section of the Heading 2.
- ▶ Heading 4 is usually a sub-section of the Heading 3.

Do NOT:

- ☹ Format headings using bold or font size
- ☹ Skip heading styles (e.g., don't jump from h1 to h3)
- ☹ Use extra line spaces between headings or paragraphs

[More info on heading styles](#)

Alternative Text (for images)

Purpose: Alternative text provides a written description of non-text content in web pages. It's read by screen readers in place of images, allowing the content and function of the image to be understandable to those with visual or certain cognitive disabilities. It's also displayed in place of an image if the image file on a web page is not loaded.

Try to provide as accurate a description as possible, so the user can get a sense of the image in their mind's eye.

EXAMPLE -



Inappropriate Alt Text
Image of cartoon about plagiarism

Appropriate Alt Text
Cartoon of two men in jail, one saying to the other, "Grand theft auto. . .You?" and the other replying, "Plagiarism."

If there is text within an image, that text should be included in the alt text description. If the description is more than 20 words, use a “long text description” method.

(The easiest way to do that in Canvas is to create a separate page with the long text description. Under the image, provide a link titled “accessible description of image” which links to the description page. At the bottom of the description page, provide a link back to the original content page.)

Do NOT:

☹️ Include the word “image” or “picture” in alt text

[More info on alt text](#)

Descriptive Links

Purpose: Descriptive links provide users with the proper context of where the link will take them when clicked. Screen reader users often navigate (skim) going from link to link so providing meaningful links is extremely important.

EXAMPLE –

YES: Read our college’s [Academic Integrity policies](#).

NO: Be sure to read about Academic Integrity. [Learn more](#).

Do NOT:

☹️ Say “click here”

☹️ Underline text for emphasis (we’re all trained that underlining means a link)

[More info on descriptive links](#)

Color

Purpose: Sufficient contrast between foreground (text or graphics) and background is important for both low vision and colorblind users. Maximum contrast is black versus white, but this combination can be considered too overwhelming (it might cause glare). Other colors can be used—such as navy, dark green, or maroon for dark backgrounds, and pastels for light backgrounds.

(NOTE: It's HIGHLY discouraged to use light text against a dark background. It tires the eye more quickly and can produce a shimmering effect that's hard to read.)

Here's an example of [poor color contrast](#).

[Here's another example](#)

Do NOT:

☹️ Use color alone to convey meaning

☹️ Use blocks of colored text to “liven up” your page; use images instead

[More Info on color](#)

Lists

Purpose: Lists provide a linear, structured order to content. Unordered lists should be used for content that has no sequence or order of importance. Ordered lists should be used to indicate a progression. Lists can be nested within other lists (much like an outline).

“Faux” lists (created using spaces or tabs) will be interpreted by a screen reader device as regular text, not as a list.

EXAMPLE –

Unordered list (bullets)

Grocery list –

- Olive Oil
- Green Onions
- Ground Beef
- Tomato Sauce

Ordered list (numbers or letters)

Directions to the store

1. Go north on College Ave.
2. Turn left at Baker St.
3. At the 2nd street, turn left again
4. Turn right into the parking lot

Do NOT:

- ☹️ Use spaces to format lists or columns

[More info on lists](#)

Tables

Purpose: Tables allow sighted students to identify the relationship of tabular data presented in a grid. Because those using screen readers can't make the same visual associations, identifying row and column headers with proper “tagging” allows them to understand the relationship of the elements within the table.

EXAMPLE –

	Col Header	Col Header	Col Header	Col Header	Col Header
	Breed	Type of Breed	Coat	Lap Cat	Adult Weight
Row Header	Bengal	Hybrid	Short	No	15
Row Header	Scottish Fold	Natural/Mutation	Short	No	9
Row Header	Siberian	Natural	Long	Yes	14

AVOID:

- ☹️ Complex tables with unnecessary rows or columns
- ☹️ Nested tables (a table within a table)

TIP: Lists can be used as a replacement for simple tables (which are often more difficult for screen reader users to navigate and interpret).

[More info on table headers](#)

Video/Audio

Purpose: Captions are text versions of dialogue/narration within a video. Captions allow the video to be accessible to those who do not have audio. Captions should be:

- Synchronized - the text content should appear at approximately the same time that audio would be available
- Equivalent - content provided in captions should be equivalent to that which is actually being said

Transcripts are written versions of an audio or video that are presented external to the multimedia itself. Transcripts should contain additional descriptions, explanations or comments that may be helpful (e.g., indicating laughter or other sounds).

For most web video, both captions and a text transcript should be provided. For content that is audio only, a transcript will usually suffice.

Do NOT:

- ☹️ Rely on auto-generated captioning ("craptions") with no punctuation and erroneous speech-to-text
- ☹️ Set video or audio to play automatically (allow student to press play when ready)